

Darlington Proposed Submission Local Plan (2016 -2036)

Transport Topic Paper

February 2021



Background

Darlington Borough Council (DBC) is preparing a new Local Plan which sets out the long term vision for the borough for 20 years between 2016 and 2036.

The Darlington Borough Local Plan 2016 – 2036 (the Local Plan) aims to establish the policy framework that guides and shapes development with specific aims of:

1. Facilitating economic growth,
2. Meeting housing needs,
3. Creating a well connected borough,
4. Create cohesive, proud and healthy communities,
5. Protect and enhance the countryside and natural environment,
6. Respond to climate change and reduce energy consumption.

Successful implementation of this strategy will enable Darlington Borough to continue to grow and prosper providing appropriate housing and job opportunities for existing and future residents. The ambitious growth aspirations contained within the plan will inevitably place pressures on the boroughs transport network in particular the strategic highway network and major roads within the borough. These pressures will require careful management and necessary mitigations factored into the Local Plan.

Specific objectives relating to transport identified in the Draft Local Plan are to:

- Ensure that new development is in places where it will be reasonably accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
- Maintain and improve transport links between communities within the borough and further afield.
- Support development that enhances regionally and nationally important transport links including those offered by Darlington Station, Teesside Airport, Teesport and the Strategic Road Network.
- Improve the local highway network by managing strategic highway demands.
- Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, including the supply of appropriate housing.
- Secure provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth including improvements to existing services.

Assessing Highway Impacts

As part of preparing the Local Plan DBC commissioned Systra to undertake highway modelling work on the emerging Local Plan proposals for housing and employment allocations.

The impact of development was assessed using the Tees Valley strategic Cube (Voyager) model to understand the overall impact of development on the network. These outputs have been used to inform more detailed micro- simulation modelling around the key corridors of:

- North Darlington - A167/A1150
- East Darlington - A66 Corridor
- West Darlington - A68/ Coniscliffe Road

Reports have been published on both the Strategic modelling and the three microsimulation models. The modelling work concludes the overall assessment is that the Local Plan will not have a severe impact on the highway network.

A number of highway mitigation schemes are proposed and some have already been delivered. They comprise improvements at key junctions and new link roads, that perform a dual function of creating access for development and providing an efficient route for through traffic. They are listed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and contributions will be sought from developers and other sources to fund these schemes.

Policy IN1 C) i-vii covers this requirement. Contributions to schemes will be sought at the planning application stage and the timing of the improvements will be secured through triggers associated with phasing of the development such that only a certain number of properties can be developed before an required infrastructure improvement scheme is implemented.

Public Transport Accessibility

Existing Rail Network Provision and Planned Improvements

Darlington is the main interchange hub in the Tees Valley for national and inter-regional rail connections, making it a 'gateway' for rail journeys into and out of the Tees Valley. Typically in the region of 2.2 million passengers use Darlington station each year.

However, in comparison to its excellent north-south connectivity, Darlington is relatively inaccessible from other key centres within the Tees Valley and from nearby employment areas of South Durham via the Bishop Line. Journey times to Darlington from Middlesbrough and Stockton (as adjacent key centres) are improving, taking between 26-28 minutes which is comparable with car travel, however there are currently no direct train services from Stockton or Hartlepool to Darlington. The service is currently operated every 30 minutes with aspirations for a 15 minute frequency through to Saltburn. This relatively poor east-west connectivity by rail within the Tees Valley impacts on the external connectivity of the Tees Valley as a whole, reducing the attractiveness of the excellent north-south links from Darlington to potential users from the rest of the Tees Valley. However, capacity issues at Darlington are currently a constraint to enhancing these local rail links. In addition, Darlington Station has been identified as one of the stations that will need to be upgraded as necessary to accommodate high speed rail services.

Darlington to Bishop Auckland by train is around a 27 minute journey but is only operated on an hourly service. There are ambitions to increase this to a half hourly service.

Given the predicted increase in car ownership¹ in the Tees Valley and the advantage of car journey times, increased trips are forecast on the road network. Therefore, improvements to local as well as long distance rail services are sought by 2036.

Ensuring that rail freight can move easily to and from Teesport will be an important issue during the Local Plan period, for example, the operation of the Hitachi train manufacturing at Newton Aycliffe is identified as being one of the key employment opportunities in the North East and it is intended that components and other supplies required by the plant will be transported by rail as often as possible. For the site to be well served by rail from Teesport, improvements and upgrades to Darlington Station are required. Teesport is by some margin the most important port in the North East and the fifth largest in the UK.

The Council is working with TVCA and other local authorities along the route of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to make the case to Government and the rail industry for further investment in the ECML. Such investment is seen as essential to improve journey times, service reliability, service frequency and the line capacity that is needed to support the movement of people and freight envisaged for Darlington and the Tees Valley, as set out in Darlington's Economic Strategy and the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan. The local authorities are keen to have a strong partnership with the rail industry, to create a vision for and the strategic development of the ECML and connecting services and routes, both for passengers and freight. Improvements that may be brought forward within the Plan period are:

- a) A revised platform layout and better passenger facilities at Darlington Station, either for local train services only or for ECML/High Speed rail and local train services;
- b) Modifications to rail infrastructure to permit larger shipping containers to be moved on freight trains, thus increasing the competitiveness of local businesses including Teesport;

¹ Road Traffic Forecasts 2015, Department for Transport, March 2015

- c) Improving sustainable travel options to stations, including:
 - i. Plan for Darlington Station - first phase being the construction of Parkgate Footbridge which was completed in 2018; Work is ongoing to improve the main walking routes to Darlington Station.
 - ii. Lack of car parking at Dinsdale Station (Middleton St. George).

Policy IN1 B iii addresses the requirement to improve Darlington Station to enable more frequent sub-regional rail services to operate between Darlington and the Tees Valley and Bishop Auckland.

Policy IN1 B i provides for improved rail links.

Policy IN1 B ii addresses the requirement for improved connectivity/interchange at the rail stations within Darlington.

Existing Bus Network Provision and Planned Improvements

The quality of the road network will remain a vital part of any transport strategy as it is shared by several transport modes, including some more sustainable modes, such as public transport and cycling. It is therefore in the wider interest of sustainable travel to have a road network that continues to function efficiently.

The continued growth of the economy should also take into account the use of all modes of transport and not just car based transport. Research has shown that the lack of a bus route can lead to jobs being turned down by unemployed people. Bus networks in England are estimated to generate over £2.5bn in economic benefits – around £1.3bn reflect user benefits from access to jobs, training, shopping and leisure opportunities. The remaining £1.2bn of benefits accrue to other transport users and society at large, through reduction in congestion, reduced pollution, lower accident rates, improved productivity and the stand-by value of bus networks.

Darlington is comparatively well served by bus with around 90% of the population served by a frequent (30 minute) service. The services are a mixture of town services (that run between the towns residential areas and employment sites, and the Town Centre) and out of town services that link to North Yorkshire, South Durham and the Tees Valley to the east.

Public Transport Accessibility for Local Plan Sites

The Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal considered the proximity of sites to public transport routes or their potential to offer improved access owing to the quantum of development proposed. Each site considered for selection was given a performance rating which when combined with another criteria relating to likely highway impact provided an overall rating for the sustainable travel objective.

The 400m walking distance from a bus stop used in this assessment is derived from the Department of Environment Circular 82/73 (DOE, 1973) which gives 400 metres as the recommended maximum walking distance along the footpath system, this represents a 5-minute walk at about 5 kph (roughly the average walking speed in the National Travel Survey). The Chartered Institution of Highways &

Transportation (CIHT) in their most recent guidance 'Buses in Urban Developments' January 2018² challenges the 400 meter criterion and suggests a range of criteria between 500m and 250m in different locations would be more appropriate to acknowledge that a flexible approach is required in certain circumstances. As Darlington has a relatively compact main urban area and clearly defined

²https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/4459/buses_ua_tp_full_version_v5.p

larger villages it is not considered there is a clear need to go for a lower threshold for Town Centres etc.

Table 1 Extract from Sustainability Appraisal Site Assessment Rationale Criteria 7a/b

SA Objectives	Decision Making Criteria	Performance	Assessment Rationale
<p>7. Encourage sustainable travel. Provide development which reduces reliance on private vehicles, maximising access to public transport and active travel modes.</p>	<p>a. Will it reduce the distance people need to travel to work or to access services and facilities and will it prioritise development on well located sites, especially the town centre?</p>	<p>++</p>	<p>Site is located within 400m of a bus route/train station providing a frequent service.</p> <p><u>and</u></p> <p>Scores positively in relation to SA Objective 1a</p>
	<p>b. Will it provide access to a range of employment, education, health service and leisure opportunities via a frequent public transport service?</p>	<p>+</p>	<p>Site is located within 400 metres of a bus route/train station providing a frequent service.</p>
		<p>0</p>	<p>Site is located between 400m and 800m of a bus route/train station providing a frequent service, or within 400m of a bus stop/train station offering a reduced frequency of service.</p>
		<p>-</p>	<p>Site is not located within 800m of a bus route/train station providing a frequent service, but is between 400-800m of a bus stop/train station offering a reduced frequency of service.</p>
		<p>--</p>	<p>Site is not located within 800m of a bus route/train station providing a frequent service, or within 800m of a bus stop/train station offering a reduced frequency of service.</p>
		<p>+ / -</p>	<p>Site is not located within 400 metres of a bus route/train station but is large enough to potentially contribute towards a new or extended bus service (500+ dwellings or 5+ ha of non-residential development). Likely to be large enough to provide new facilities on site to serve the needs of the development and reduce the need to travel.</p> <p><u>or</u></p> <p>Site is located within 400 metres of a bus route/train station providing a reduced frequency service but is</p>

			large enough to potentially contribute towards improving the service frequency, at least on a temporary basis (200+ dwellings or 2+ ha of non-residential development).
--	--	--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Further analysis of the site assessment results of sites included within the Draft Local Plan has been undertaken to try and identify any significant gaps in access to the public transport network. Most sites scoring negatively were omitted in the site selection process therefore sites score generally positively, neutral or have the potential to be positive or neutral dependent on mitigation. The following table shows how the sites in the Draft Local Plan scored.

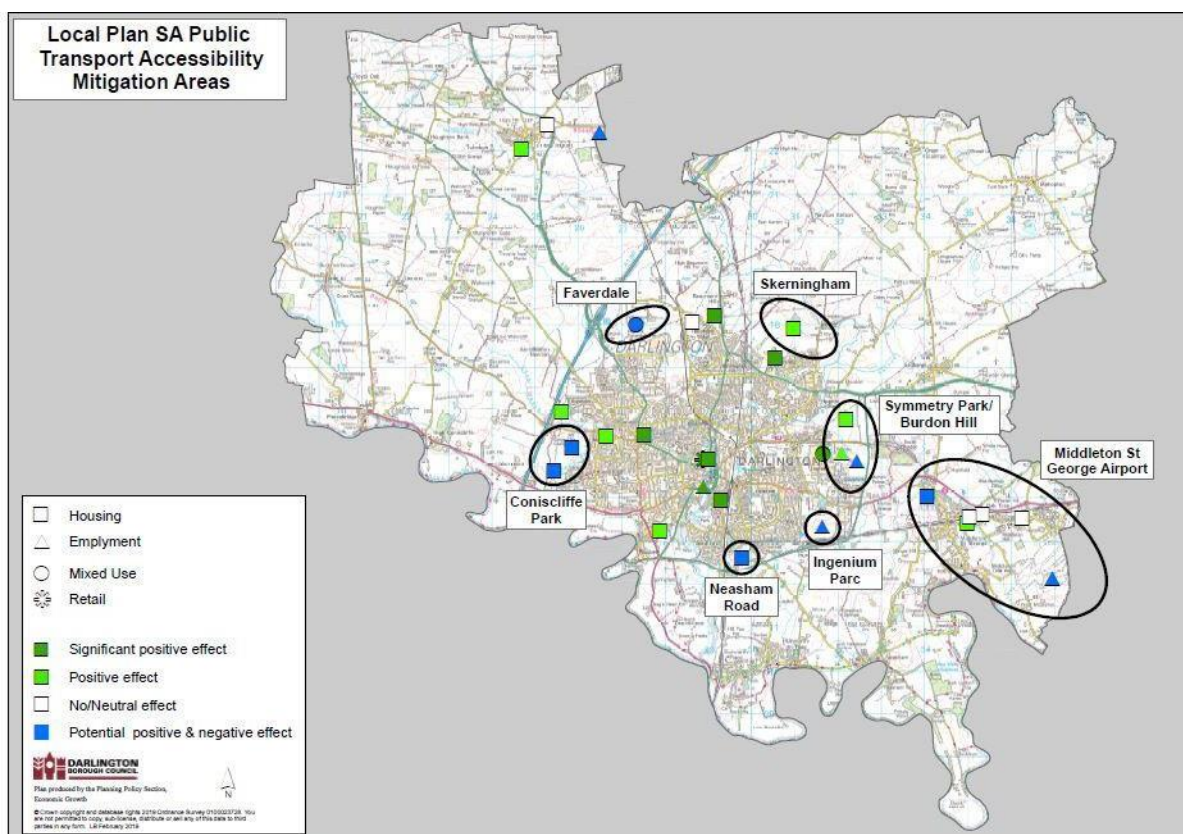
Table 2 Accessibility criteria for sites included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan

Site Reference	Decision Making Criteria 7a
Housing	
3: Land South of Burtree Lane	0
8: Berrymead Farm	++
11: Cattle Mart	++
20: Great Burdon	+
41: South Coniscliffe Park	+/-
95: Beech Crescent East, Heighington	0
99: Maxgate Farm, MSG	+/-
100: Hall Farm, Branksome	+
249: Coniscliffe Park North	+/-
251: Skerningham	+
318 : N of Allington Way	++
392 : Elm Tree Farm	++
403: Blackwell Grange East	+
411: Chesnut Street Car Park	++
412 : 12-18 Skinnergate	++
Employment	
80: East of Lingfield Point (Employment)	+
351: SW Town Centre Fringe	++
356: Ingenium Parc	+/-
360: Heighington North	+/-
362: DTVA South	+/-
367: Land to west of A66 (Link 66)	+/-
Mixed Use	
185: Greater Faverdale Masterplan Area	+/-
355: Lingfield Point	++
Commercial	
271: Commercial and Kendrew Street Car Parks	++

Potential Public Transport Mitigation Measures

Mapping the sites proposed for allocation in the Draft Local plan earlier in the process identified a number of areas where interventions could be made to improve accessibility to public transport. These are:

- Coniscliffe Park (41, 249)
- Faverdale (Burtree Graden Village)(185)
- Skerningham (251)
- Burdon Hill/Symmetry Park/Ingenium Parc (20, 367, 356)
- Neasham Road (243) * Now committed
- Middleton St George/Airport (367)



For the sites above it is the intention that a contribution will be sought in order to secure an accessible bus service. Depending on the nature of commercially available services in the vicinity, this could either be through an extension/rerouting of an existing service, or through the procurement of an entirely new bus service. This is dependent on decision making by the commercial bus operators in conjunction with Darlington Borough Council, of which early engagement during the planning stage will be crucial.

The site specific bus services should connect the developments to the town centre, on a half hourly basis, Monday to Saturday from 8am until 6pm, as a minimum. The contribution would be for a period of up to 5 years, which would enable the service to commence operation at certain trigger points during the period of occupation. The aim of the service would be to become commercially viable following this initial period of kick start funding. Contributions would be sought in line with the Planning Obligations SPD or subsequent replacement document.

that 80% of the site must be within 400m of a bus stop served by a regular service.

Policy IN2 f enables contributions to be secured for the provision of bus service and infrastructure. This provides the policy framework for securing contributions to ensure that the developments that do not currently have good bus accessibility, as listed above, can be served by new specific services or extensions to existing commercial services.

Post Covid-19 recovery

Bus operators have been badly affected by Covid-19 restrictions but have been offered interim financial support from Government and local Authorities. We are working closely with the operators across the Tees Valley to support the reintroduction of a stable commercial network. This work is led by Tees Valley Combined Authority.

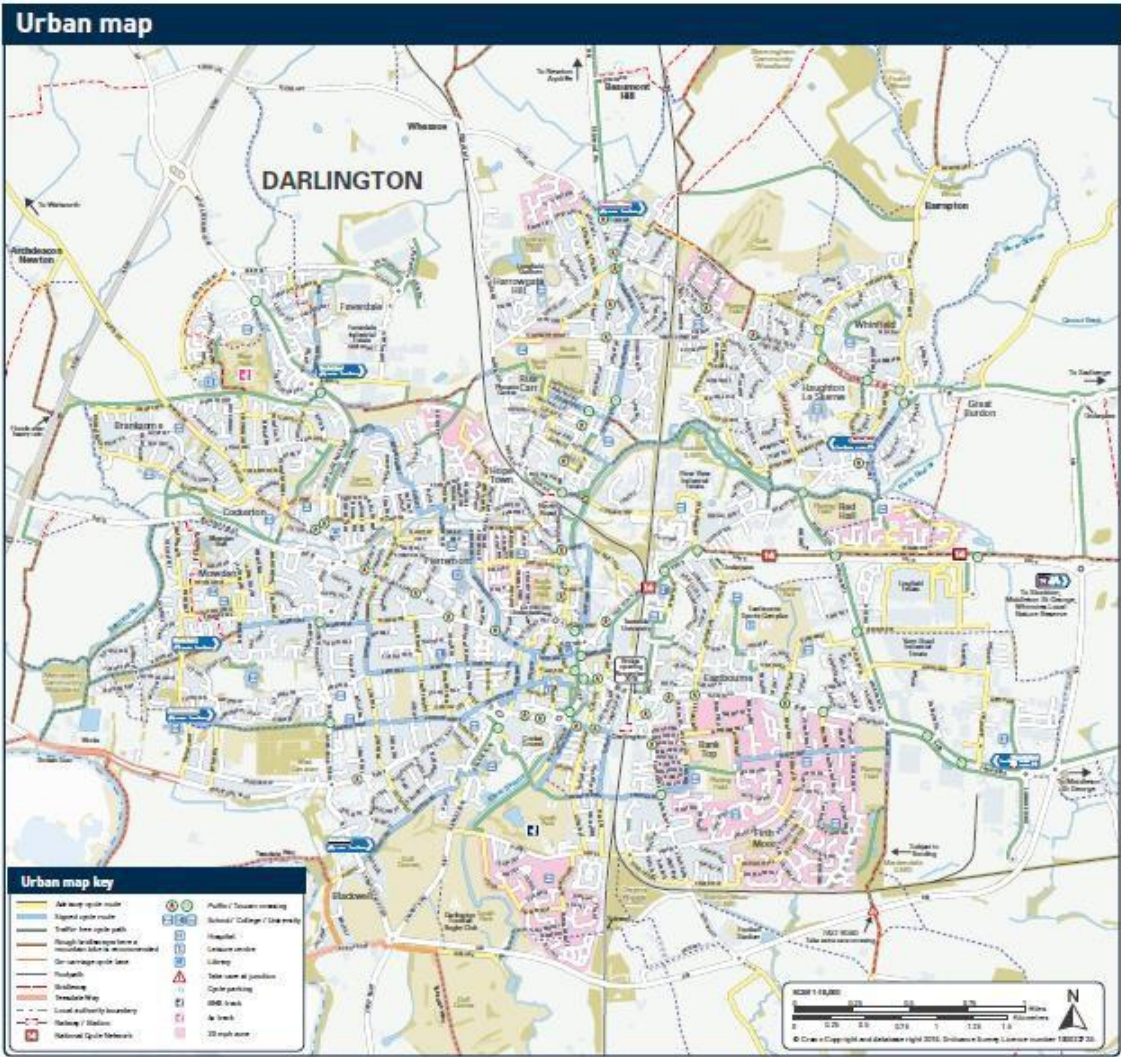
Cycling and Walking Accessibility

As part of an assessment of smarter choices, existing walking and cycling accessibility within Darlington Borough have been examined in relation to the proposed allocations in the Local Plan.

Within Darlington Borough there are various means which people can use to make active journeys. These include dedicated cycle paths/lanes, shared surfaces, advisory cycle routes on local roads deemed suitable for cycling. In addition the national cycling network (NCN) provides connections to the wider Tees Valley and Durham Region.

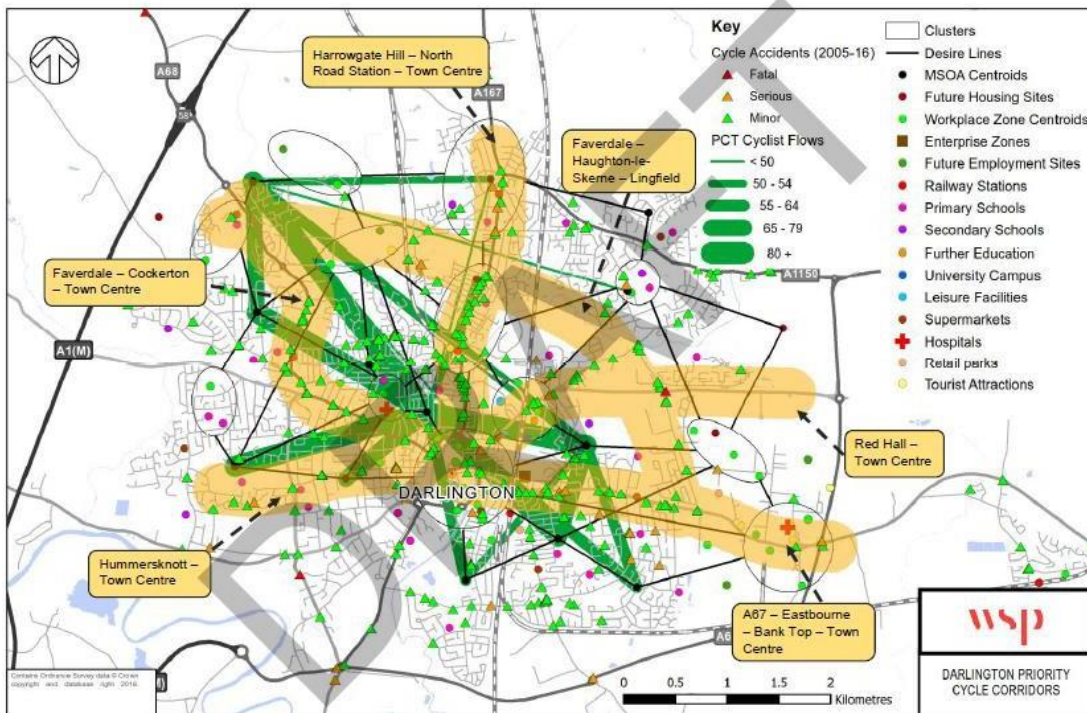
As a Cycling Demonstration Town between 2005 – 2011 Darlington had funding to implement 7 radial cycling routes from the edge of Darlington to the town centre. These radial routes are all connected by a circular route. In total there are over 40km of off-road cycle route in Darlington and 26km of signed routes. These radial routes form the core of the Darlington cycling network and additions to it are provided whenever possible.

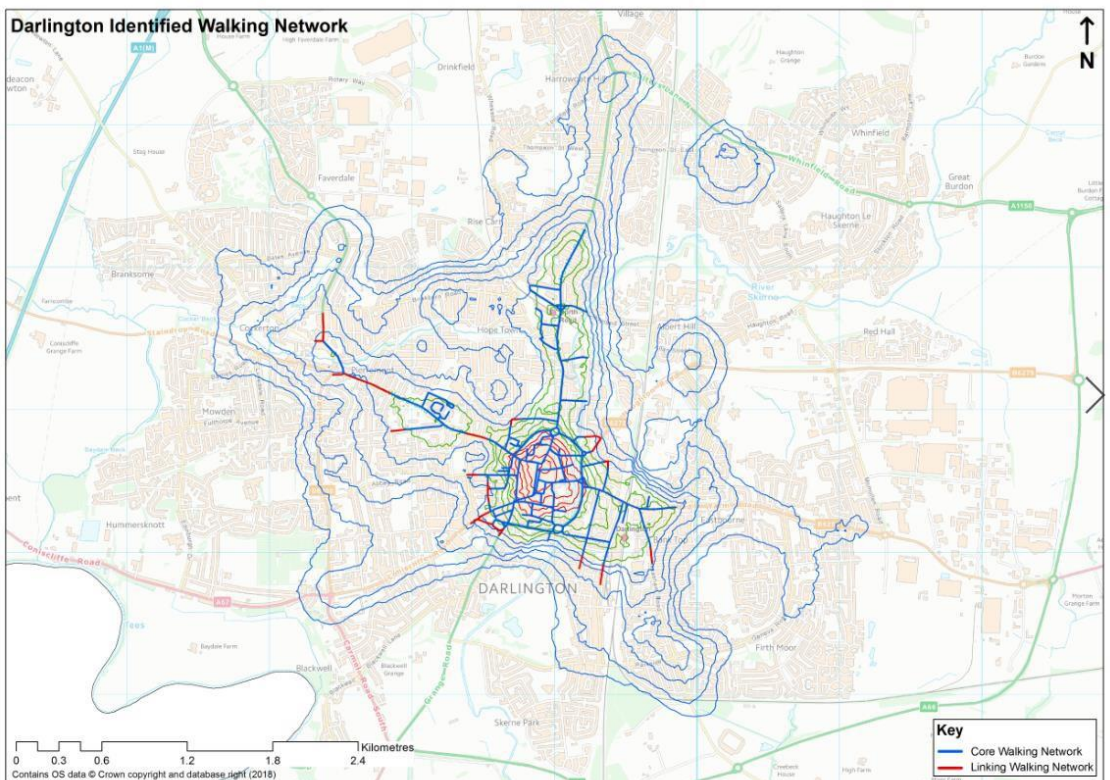
In addition to local cycling routes, National Cycle Route 14 runs from Darlington and Stockton and beyond to North Yorkshire, and Regional Route 52 runs inside the southern edge of the Borough.



Analysis has been carried out as part of the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) showing the key improvement corridors for walking and cycling based on current flows, accident data and trip generators. A list of priority corridors was identified through this process and they are identified below:

Corridor	Rationale
Darlington town centre to the east of the town as far as the A66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant existing and planned housing and employment sites. • Areas of deprivation immediately to the east and northeast of the town centre. • Under the Government Target scenario there is expected to be large growth in cycling, focussed on the town centre with an increase in trips between here and Eastbourne and Haughton-le-Skerne.
Darlington town centre to Faverdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant existing and planned housing and employment sites. • There is a reliance on the private car for short commuting trips. • Under the Government Target scenario there is expected to be large growth in cycling focussed on the town centre with an increase in trips between here and Faverdale.
Town centre to Harrowgate Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of cycling accidents along the A167, indicating potential demand.
Town centre to Hummersknott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCT projections show high cycle demand from Hummersknott to town centre.
Town centre to Red Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects to significant future development sites to the east of the town.
Faverdale to Lingfield via Haughton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCT analysis finds significant potential cycling demand for cross-town trips. • Provides an alternative route to those via the town centre.





The two priority corridors for the LCWIP improvements are the Darlington to Faverdale and Darlington to A66 corridors. These corridors connect Darlington’s 3 main employment areas: Faverdale, the Town Centre and employment sites around Yarm Road, to the west of the A66.

A scheme has been developed for the first phase of the Darlington to Faverdale route which provides a good quality on road route between the Town Centre and Hollyhurst Road, where Darlington Memorial Hospital is located.

Other identified routes such as the Town centre to Redhall and Faverdale to Haughton routes are already served by convenient off road cycle routes and don’t require major improvements.

Policy IN1 A i will protect existing routes from development that impedes the convenience and functioning of existing cycle routes within the Borough.

Policy IN 1 A ii safeguards proposed cycling and walking routes identified in the LCWIP and Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Cycling and Walking Accessibility for Local Plan Sites

The Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal considered the proximity of sites to cycling, walking and public transport routes or their potential to offer improved access owing to the quantum of development proposed. Each site considered for selection was given a performance rating which when combined with other criteria relating to providing a mixture of affordable, well designed and suitably located new housing.

Table 4 Extract from Sustainability Appraisal Site Assessment Rationale Criteria 1b

SA Objectives	Decision Making Criteria	Performance	Assessment Rationale
---------------	--------------------------	-------------	----------------------

<p>1. Provide a mixture of affordable, well designed and sustainably located new housing, and improve the standard of existing housing, especially to</p>	<p>b. Will it provide good quality and safe connections to cycle and walking networks?</p> <p>Cycle network based on routes identified on the Local Motion website: http://www.dothelocalmotion.co.uk/ways-to-travel/cycle/cycle-routes-maps/</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">++</p>	<p>The site is well served by existing cycle routes, footpaths and public transport services,</p> <p><u>and</u></p> <p>The site provides the opportunity to create new routes/services strengthening connections with surrounding areas.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

provide for young people, families and older people.		+	The site is well served by existing cycle routes, footpaths and public transport services.
		+ / -	Reasonable/poor connectivity to existing cycle routes, footpaths and public transport services, but the site provides the opportunity to create new routes/services strengthening connections with surrounding areas.
		-	Reasonable connectivity to existing cycle routes, footpaths and public transport services with no prospect for improvement.
		--	Poor connectivity to existing cycle routes, footpaths and public transport services with no prospect for improvement.

Table 5 Accessibility criteria for sites included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan

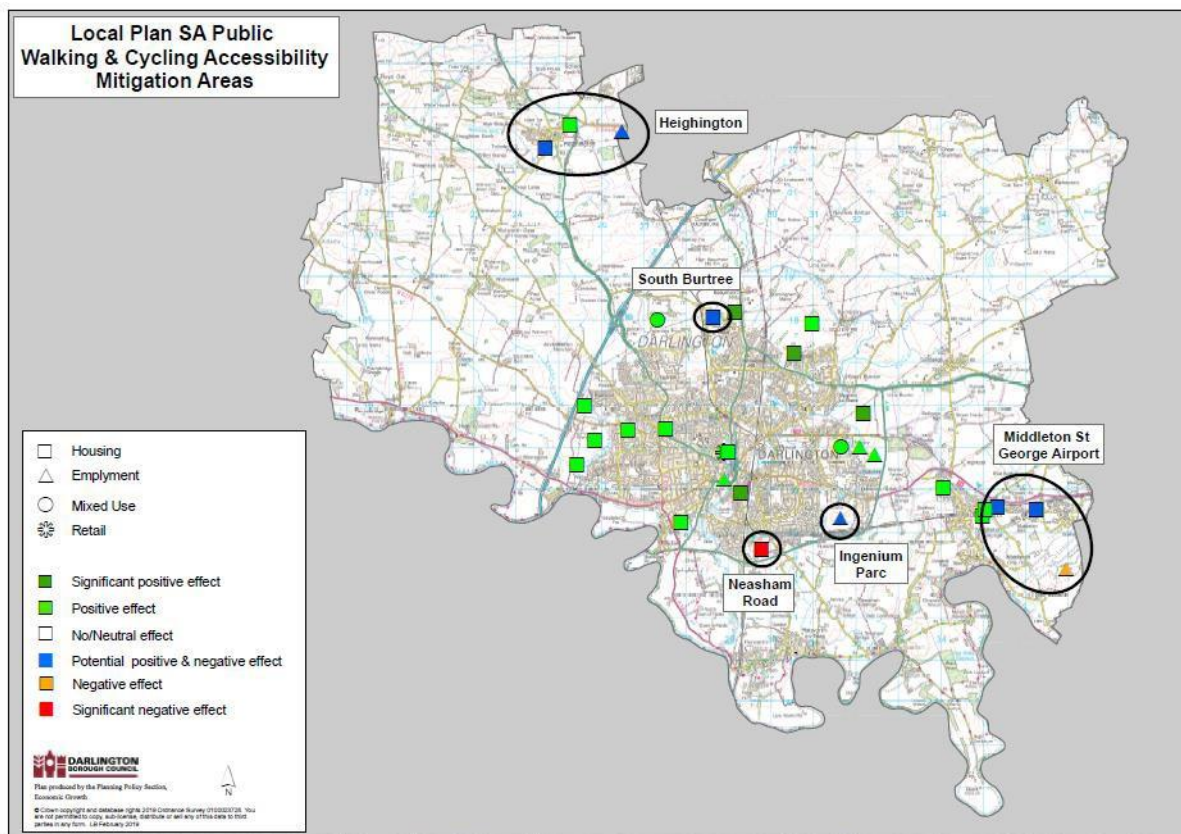
Site Reference	Decision Making Criteria 1b
Housing	
3: Land South of Burtree Lane	+/-
8: Berrymead Farm	++
11: Cattle Mart	++
20: Great Burdon	++
41: South Coniscliffe Park	+
95: Beech Crescent East, Heighington	+
99: Maxgate Farm, MSG	+
100: Hall Farm, Branksome	+
249: Coniscliffe Park North	+
251: Skerningham	+
392: Elm Tree Farm	++

Site Reference	Decision Making Criteria 1b
403: Blackwell Grange East	+
411: Chesnut Street Car Park	++
412: 12 – 18 Skinnergate	++
Employment	
80: East of Lingfield Point (Employment)	+
351: SW Town Centre Fringe	+
356: Ingenium Parc	+/-
360: Heighington North	+/-
362: DTVA South	-
367: Land to west of A66 (Link 66)	+
Mixed Use	
185: Greater Faverdale Masterplan Area	+
355: Lingfield Point	+
Commercial	
271: Commercial and Kendrew Street Car Parks	+

Potential Cycling and Walking Mitigation Measures

Mapping the sites proposed for allocation in the Draft Local plan earlier in the process has identified a number of areas where interventions could be made to improve accessibility to walking and cycling. These are:

- Heighington
- South of Burtree Lane
- Ingenium Parc
- Neasham Road
- Middleton St George/Airport



Plans to improve walking and cycling connectivity are in place at a number of these locations as detailed below;

Neasham Road

The Neasham Road site does not currently access the cycle network, however, a cycleway connection along Neasham Road is now proposed, as part of an approved development. There are a number of Public Footpaths around the site which would benefit from being upgraded to allow cyclists to use them. The site phasing plan indicates that a route will be developed through the site to connect to Skerne Park to the west.

Middleton St George and Teesside Airport

National Cycle Network (NCN) route 14 runs through the western section of Middleton St George and serves both Darlington and Stockton. Plans for a proposed link to Stockton via Eaglescliffe are in development as part of the Stockton to Darlington Railway 1825 route. When complete this will provide good provision to Darlington, South Durham and Teesside. This is a strategic leisure route that will be developed by Darlington Council and neighbouring authorities.

Burtree Lane

Access to this site for pedestrians is currently very limited. There are currently no footpaths near the development on Whessoe Road or Burtree Lane. There is an aspiration to have a walking and cycling route alongside the railway as part of Stockton to Darlington Railway 1825 route. Access to this would have to be considered as it is likely to be along the western edge of the railway. Links are proposed to neighbouring residential estates to allow pedestrians and cyclists to access the wider walking and cycling network as part of approved developments.

Ingenium Parc

Access to Ingenium Parc for cyclists is provided in off road cycle paths alongside pedestrian facilities. In the wider area there are no cycling facilities on Yarm Road other than Advanced Stop Lines. As part of the Tees Valley LCWIP, Yarm Road is the priority corridor for additional cycling infrastructure in Darlington. To the south of the site there is a bridleway with an at grade unsignalised crossing of the A66. If there was to be increased use of this crossing and the route beyond it would require an upgrade.

Heighington

Access to this site is not possible from Darlington Town Centre and will depend upon access being provided by Durham County Council to the nearest main settlement of Newton Aycliffe which provides a wide range of employment, primary health, education and retail services. A route has been identified along low traffic routes connecting Heighington with the existing footway network in School Aycliffe.

It is likely that all sites will be required to require to carry out some improvements to connect to the existing walking and cycling network. This will be considered on a site by site basis at the planning application stage as the points of connection will be determined by the layout of the roads and green corridors within the sites. Other improvements in the vicinity of the site may be required to improve crossing points across main roads or to provide safe routes to school.

Policy IN2 c requires all development to provide safe access to the Borough wide cycling and walking network. Policy IN1 A iv covers the potential need to improve crossing points across busy transport corridors.

Policy IN2 f enables contributions to be sought for improvements to safer routes to school and public rights of way.

Conclusions

Extensive highway modelling work has concluded that the development proposed in the Local Plan will not have a significant cumulative impact on traffic subject to the implementation of phased mitigation measures. Further information is provided in the detailed modelling reports.

The Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal considered the proximity of sites in terms of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling. Each site considered for selection was given a performance rating for both access by public transport and by walking and cycling.

Further analysis of the site assessment results has been undertaken to try and identify any significant gaps in access to the public transport, walking and cycling networks. Most sites scoring negatively were omitted in the site selection process therefore sites score generally positively, neutral or have the potential to be positive or neutral dependent on mitigation.

Sites will be considered at a more granular level when planning applications come forward. We aim to develop communities that encourage walking and cycling to local facilities and enable access to non-local facilities via frequent bus services and connections to the town's walking and cycling network.

The allocated sites are generally either currently accessible by sustainable modes or can be readily accessible through the provision of supported bus services and off site cycleway/footway connections.